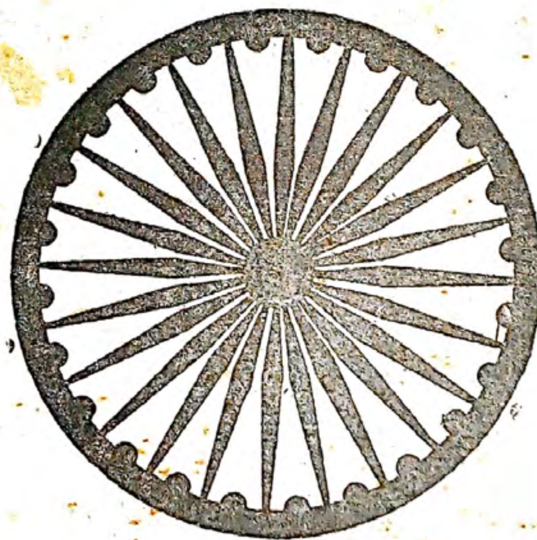
Vol. IV, Part I

THE
INDIAN NUMISMATIC CHRONICLE

Vol. III, Part II & Vol. IV, Part I

[1964-65]

Maharajadhiraja Kameshwara Singh of Darbhanga
Memorial Volume



Editor :

SHRI S. V. SOHONI, M.A., I.C.S.

PUBLISHED BY

THE BIHAR RESEARCH SOCIETY, PATNA

Price : Rs. 10/-

AGNIMITRA OF THE VAIŚĀLĪ SEALING

By

PROFESSOR K. D. BAJPAI

In the *Altekar Memorial Volume* of the *J. B. R. S.* (1959, pp. 313-17), Śrī Sita Ram Roy published an inscribed terracotta sealing, obtained from the excavations at Vaiśālī in the year 1958. He read the Brāhmī inscription of the sealing as follows :—

L. 1...............................AGIMITA
L. 2..................(SAMĀ) MIYAYE
L. 3............KOṬHA (ṬA) KĀRASA
L. 4............VIṬHI (VITHI)

The legend has been interpreted to mean that the seal belonged to the market or shop (owned by) the fort-commander or the store-officer, who was a relation through the maternal uncle of king Agnimitra.

To be correct, this interpretation is based on a surmise that on the sealing the name of Agnimitra was preceded by two letters Rāño (or Rajño). His reading of the second line, with the restoration of two letters *Sa* and *Mā*, is also correct. To me the third line seems to read as *Koṭha Kirasa* (not-*Kārasa*).

In the fourth line Śrī Roy reads *Viṭhi*, but I think that there are no letters in this line. What Śrī Roy reads as *va* and *ṭha* seem to be the remnants of a symbol, probably a *Nandīpada*, having the circle placed in front of the inverted two-arched hill. The other two symbols on the sealing are tree in railing and the 'Ujjain symbol'.

The above mentioned three symbols are well known to the students of Indian numismatics. They are usually seen on the Kauśāmbī coins. In several cases, all the three occur together, e. g. on some of the coins of king Agnimitra of Kaśāmbī. The Brāhmī characters on these coins resemble those found on the present sealing. On the palæographic grounds these coins and the

sealing can be assigned to the end of the 1st Century B. C. or to the 1st Century A. D.[1]

I am inclined to suggest that the king Agnimitra of the new Vaiśālī sealing may be equated with the Kauśāmbī ruler of that name. The conjecture of Śrī Roy that Agnimitra of the sealing may be identified with the second ruler of the Śuṅga dynasty does not appear to be correct.

Recently, I came across an inscribed fragmentary brick in the reserve collection of the Allahabad Museum I read the following inscription on this brick in the Brāhmī characters of about early first century A. D.—*udapāno Kārito raño Agamitasa.*

This inscription refers to the construction of a water-tank during the reign of king Agnimitra. The brick is reported to have been found at Kauśāmbī. I think that the king Agnimitra referred to here is no other than the Kauśāmbī king of that name.

Incidentally, a reference may be made here to the Bodhagayā railing pillar inscription mentioning kings Indrāgnimitra and Brahmamitra, whose queens made donations at Bodhagayā.[2] It may be surmised that these two rulers are the kings of Kauśāmbī known to us from coins.[3]

Regarding the correct interpretation of the inscription of the Vaiśālī sealing the explanation as given by Śrī Roy does not seem to be convincing. He infers that a government officer in the Śuṅga period, who ran a market or a shop, named it after his designation. This explanation is based on the wrong reading of the inscription. The word *Vīthi* does not occur at all in the

1. I am unable to accept the date 2nd cent. B. C. for the sealing as given by Śrī Roy.
2. See B. M. Barua, *Gaya and Bodhagaya* (Calcutta, 1934), pp. 67-69; 119-121.
3. Vincent Smith, *Catalogue of Coins in Indian Museum*, Calcutta, pl. XXIII, no. 5; Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India*, pl. XX, 5. I identify these two kings of the Bodhagaya inscriptions with kings Agnimitra and Brahmamitra respectively of Kauśāmbī. In view of the fact that royal donors from far off places visited important religious centres it is not surprising that the royal queens of Kauśāmbī made gifts at Bodhagayā. Cf. the Vidiśā queens making donations at Bharhut.

legend. To me it appears that the inscription merely records the name of Koṭhakara, a relation, probably the son of the maternal aunt of King Agnimitra. The word *Koṭha-kira* (kara) should not be taken to mean a fort-commander or a store-officer, but as the proper name of a male issuing this sealing.

During the Śuṅga rule and even after the disintegration of the Śuṅga power, a number of Mitra dynasties were ruling over Pañcāla, Mathurā, Ayodhyā, Vatsa and Magadha. This has been attested to both by epigraphic and numismatic evidence. That these Mitra houses were related to each other by matrimonial alliances is quite well known. It seems that at least from about the middle of the first century B. C. till about the end of the second Century A. D. the region of Magadha was more or less under the suzerainty of the Vatsa kingdom. Quite a large number of coins of the Mitra rulers from Kauśāmbī, assignable to this period, are known to us. The Hāthīgumphā inscription of the Kaliṅga King Khāravela refers to his contemporary ruler Bṛihaspatimitra, who has been called in the inscription, the King of Magadha. Numerous coins of king Bṛihaspatimitra (II) are known to us from Kauśāmbī. If we can identify this ruler with his name-sake, referred to in the inscription of Khāravela, this will give weight to my theory regarding the influence of the Mitra dynasty of Kauśāmbī over Māgadha during the period under review.

The symbols found on the sealing referred to above occur on the coins of Agnimitra of Kauśāmbī. Hence I am inclined to believe that the King Agnimitra mentioned in the sealing can be identified with the Kauśāmbī ruler of that name.